

Deep Forest

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Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2011-07-06 08:56:04

Updated: 2011-07-06 08:56:04

Packaged: 2016-04-27 00:42:49

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 599

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Neil is just the average marine until the Captain decides to go examine a old battle site. For some reason Neil has a feeling that the Captain is hiding something.

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****February 7, 2525 (Harvest)****

The smoke still hung thick to the trees. Half a week later and the remnants of the fight still scared the forest. Half decomposed corpses scattered the ground. Rusting weapons still clung to their original owners. The smell of the battle still stuck too the trees and clothes of the deceased. Walking the grounds they found bodies mangled in ways never seen, shouldn't be seen. Maggots scattered on the bodies feeding on the very last few specks of dead, charred flesh. "Stay wary." The Captain whispered harshly. "Booby traps still could be active."

Neil didn't understand why the Captain had to whisper, no one would hear them, but the dead. Neil also didn't understand why they would finally scavenge from the dead after so long. Nothing had been taken from the field since the day of the battle. Neil had often asked the Captain why this was, Captain just said, "Don't stick your nose were it doesn't belong." So Neil, only just a Private didn't dare try to push anything out of the old Navy Captain. The battle site was one of the very first encounters with the Covenant. Harvest. In the small forest village of Nom, the Covenant fell upon it on accident, but what happened after was no accident. A slaughter through out the whole village. Anyone caught running from the scene was tortured, then brutally murdered. UNSC forces arrived almost four hours later, The Covenant hadn't stuck around. In the companies report they described what was left of the village, a 'ghost town'. The description was very accurate. It was amazingly quite. Even with the Captain's squad of four counting Neil himself. The only sound was of twigs under-foot. Up ahead Neil could hardly see the others in their green fatigues, against the green of the forest. "Private Minster."

The Captain said. Neil turned to face the man in grey fatigues. "Yes, sir?" Neil responded. The Captain's old, scared face spoke, "Radio the other men, it's time to go." Neil was bewildered. "Sir, but we've only just got here. I painfully have to disagree." The Captain face showed a twinge of surprise. "You do as your told Private Minster!" He shouted into Neil's face. "Yes, sir." Neil snapped a sharp salute. As Neil radioed the others to return to the drop ship the Captain mumbled, "You'd better get your head outta your ass Private, or I will have you shipped somewhere else." Neil turned, "It's done sir." "Very good" The Captain smiled and started trudging back through the forest to the drop ship, Neil on his heels. Something in the Captain's hand started to beep. "Sir?" Neil asked, "What is that? Because it sounds an awful lot like a distress signal-" As the words left his lips Neil heard a loud explosion in the distance. The Captain stopped in his tracks. Neil just stared in the direction of the blare, in awe. He snapped out of it, grabbed the Captain by the arm and pulled him behind one of the larger of the tree trunks. "Shit, shit, shit" The Captain whispered under his breath. Neil spoke into the COM, "Charlie Team, come in Charlie Team. Char-." The Captain cut him off, "They're dead Private." Neil felt his blood turn cold. "Sir, they were behind us though." "Yes, Private they were." Neil felt like he was going to freeze over now. "We have to move, sir." Neil grabbed the Captain and raced off through the forest.

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